

Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs



Vet News: Week of February 6, 2014

What's New This Week:

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ADVA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Offices Closed

The ADVA offices at Ft. Roots will be closed to walk-ins and appointments on Feb. 17 for President's Day and Feb. 24-28 for Travel Board hearings. To make an appointment with a VSO, call (501) 370-3820.



Icy weather changed the scenery at both Arkansas State Veterans Cemeteries in North Little Rock (left) and Birdeye, which is still without power today, Thursday.

Fayetteville Veterans Home Making Facility Changes

The Arkansas State Veterans Home in Fayetteville is converting one patient room to a bereavement room for end of life care. The Military Order of the Purple Heart has agreed to donate money for to purchase special items for the room (a sleeper sofa for family to stay, comfortable recliner, end table, lamps, small fridge for snacks, coffee pot, etc.

This will be done as a comfort to both Veterans and their families during end of life care at the home.

If your organization would like to help sponsor this project, contact Fayetteville home administrator Kriss Schaffer at kriss.schaffer@arkansas.gov.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



Photo Mike Adam

Shown in the accompanying photo is Arkansas 2nd District Congressman Tim Griffin (far right) presenting the Army Good Conduct Medal to Peter Smykla. Smykla's wife, son-in-law and grandchildren were in attendance.

56 Year Overdue Medal Presented

Fifty-six years ago a 24-year-old soldier was discharged from the Army after serving with the Military Assistance Advisory Group on Taiwan.

Specialist 3 Peter Smykla was awarded the Army Good Conduct Medal when he was discharged from the Army, but never received it.

That oversight was rectified at the Hot Springs Arlington Hotel on last week. Smykla, Chairman of the Jefferson County Republican Committee, was attending the State Committee Meeting.

Congressman Tim Griffin, a serving U.S. Army Reserve

lieutenant colonel, JAG, presented the medal to Smykla after Party Chairman Doyle Webb read the award citation authorized by then Secretary of the Army Wilber Marion Brucker.

"The United States Army has awarded the Good Conduct Medal to Specialist 3 Peter Joseph Smykla, Junior, for exemplary behavior, efficiency, and fidelity in active federal military service from 11 January 1956 to 24 December 1957."

The presentation was a surprise arranged by county committee members after they learned Smykla never received his medal.

More Than 1,800 Vets' Records Intentionally Destroyed or Misfiled by 2 Clerks

ST. LOUIS — More than 1,800 personnel records for U.S. veterans were destroyed or misfiled by two student employees of the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis County, federal criminal court documents show.

One of the student employees, Lonnie Halkmon, 28, was sentenced last week to two years of probation and ordered to perform 40 hours of community service. The other, Stanley Engram, 21, is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 7. Both pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of destruction of government records and faced probation to six months in prison under federal sentencing guidelines. [Full Story](#)

FAA to Hire Veterans

The Federal Aviation Administration senior leadership announced plans to hire more than 600 new Air Traffic Control Specialists and want as many of them as possible to be Veterans. Given the pre-qualification requirements many of our recently transitioning Veterans will likely qualify.

To be considered for a position as an air traffic controller, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Start the FAA Academy no later than your 31st birthday.
- Be willing to relocate to an air traffic facility based on the FAA's highest needs at the time.
- Have three years of progressively responsible work experience, or a Bachelor's degree, or a combination of post-secondary education and work experience that totals three years.

The FAA plans on posting this opportunity on or around Feb. 10. There will also be a virtual career fair on the FAA website on Feb. 12. For more detailed information about this opportunity and how to apply, visit the FAA online at http://www.faa.gov/jobs/recruiting_kit/ - they will be receiving applications through USA Jobs on the Office of Personnel Web site.

World War II Veteran Wins Long Battle to Get Full Benefits

Millard Sells saw some of the fiercest combat of his life in 1945 on Iwo Jima, but for most of the last two decades he's been engaged in a different, more bureaucratic battle.

He's had to convince the government that sent him off to war that it should help support him due to the disabilities he suffers from his active duty.

Last week the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs notified him that he had been granted a full disability award for injuries suffered in combat and on active duty. The notice came just ahead of his 88th birthday, which is on Valentine's Day. [Full Story](#)

House Passes Veterans' Tuition Bill

Public universities will have to offer in-state rates for tuition and fees to veterans or face a financial penalty under a bill approved by House members Monday.

The legislation, known as the GI Tuition Fairness Act, gained wide bipartisan support, passing by a 390-0 vote.

If a public school doesn't offer in-state tuition and fees to veterans, it would no longer receive other GI Bill education payments. The post-9/11 GI Bill pays the in-state tuition rate for public colleges. [Full Story](#)

Gun Safety Video Illustrates the Importance of Taking Precautions

The Veterans Crisis Line gun safety video illustrates the importance of taking precautions at home when a firearm is present. It encourages Veterans, Service members and their families to make sure guns are safely secured, especially in times of crisis. Watch to learn how simple actions can help Veterans, Service members and their families stay safe. The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource that serves Veterans, Service members and their families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net, or text to 838255 for support.

<http://veteranscrisisline.net/Resources/Videos.aspx>

Top 10 Best Jobs for Veterans Announced

A new list from the [CareerCast Veterans Network](#) highlights the 10 best jobs in the U.S. for military veterans.

Veterans return home with diverse skill sets that can easily be applied to the civilian workforce, whether that be in a managerial position at a corporation, an engineering role with a telecommunications company, or a role in a growing industry like trucking.

New Online GI Bill Comparison Tool Available

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs launched this week an online [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#) to make it easier for Veterans, Servicemembers and dependents to calculate their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and learn more about VA's approved colleges, universities and other education and training programs across the country.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Annual 'Shorty Hagerman' Ride

The Annual "Shorty Hagerman" Ride, coinciding with National Salute to Veteran Patients Week, is set Feb. 10 at the USS Razorback in North Little Rock. Drop off donations start at 8:30 a.m.

Ride Brief: 0930. KSU to Ft. Roots: 0950. Flagline: 1025.

Contact: Mark Taylor: (501) 416-2488 or Alex Csanadi: (501) 960-1126.

In-Patient Veteran Items Needed:

Coffee, canteen booklets (coupons), creamer & sugar pkts, reading glasses, men's & women's body wash/shampoo/deodorant, aftershave, magnifying glass, pocket calculators, sugar-free candy, tooth brush/paste, manicure sets, hair clippers, elect razors/disp heads, liq. laundry soap, T-shirt, long/short sleeve/sweatshirts (S- 3X), Slippers (nonslip)/House Shoes/FlipFlops, large picture books, men/women underwear, hats/beanies/ballcaps, gloves, jeans/kakis 30-44, blankets, hoodies, jackets, men/women shoes (8-12), tennis shoes w/velcro strap(8-12), sweats (lg-4X), Subscrip to local papers/mags, coats (40-48), microwave popcorn/bags, bingo prizes.

Bigger Items (For Wards):

Apartment Kits: \$210 (homeless transition), puzzle trays, small radios (non-CD), bedside storage bins, smoothie maker/blender, Keurig or Bunn Coffee maker w/dual pots, microwaves, 12 cup coffee pot, dishwasher for CLC.

For more information about donating or volunteering, contact VA Volunteer Services at (501) 257-3288.

Annual Tribute to Fallen Heroes Ceremony Set March 29

For the ninth year, the Michael Vann Johnson, Jr., American Legion Post #74 of North Little Rock will host the Annual Tribute to Fallen Heroes Ceremony on Saturday, March 29. The Ceremony begins at 11 a.m. at Sherwood Forest, 1111 West Maryland, off Hwy 107 in Sherwood.

This year's guest speaker is author and Native Arkansan, Walter Carter Tucker. Mr. Tucker served as a US Navy Submariner during the Korean War as well as a Chaplain during the Vietnam War where he served in the US Army for almost 16 years and later retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1981.

Gold Star families are always special guests. This ceremony honors the memory of all American Armed Forces personnel who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving in defense of our country as a result of OEF/OIF Operations.

Any and all Rider Groups that would like to be a part of the motorcade are welcome to assemble with Post #74 to travel to the event. Coffee and donuts will be served at 7:30 a.m. The motorcade will assemble at Post #74 for prayer and line up at 9:15 a.m. The American Legion Riders will lead the Rider groups in the procession. The motorcade will depart at 9:45 A.M. Any and all active duty, Guard or Reserve branches are welcome.

If you have any questions, would like to RSVP, volunteer or need additional information, call 501-374-9002 or contact R.D. Kinsey, Post Commander @ 501-247-4765 or rdk52@hotmail.com.

Please RSVP, no later than March 24.

COUNTY NEWS

County VSO Announcements

The Clay County Veteran Service Office is closed for a few months. Greene CVSO and Randolph CVSO have agreed to help the Clay County Veterans in the interim.

The Columbia County Veteran Service Office will be open Monday and Tuesday each week from 8:30 to 4 p.m.

Scott County has changed the office hours/days to: Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 8 a.m. to Noon and 1-4:30 p.m.

**** *To add an event, email details to kelly.ferguson@arkansas.gov* ****

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Feb. 9-15

National Salute to Veteran Patients activities

Feb. 11

Management Advisory Council; 10 a.m.; McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital, Room 7E-101

March 15-16

Night at the Victory Canteen supporting the Jacksonville Museum of Military History; **Details to come**

March 15-16

Arkansas Run for the Fallen; www.arkansasrunforthefallen.org

March 29

Michael Vann Johnson Jr. American Legion Post 74 hosts annual Tribute to Fallen Heroes ceremony; 11 a.m.; Sherwood Forest; nationally renowned speaker and author Walter Carter Tucker is honored guest

April 5

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day will be celebrated at the Jacksonville Museum of Military History.

April 15

Arkansas Veterans Commission Regular Meeting; 10 a.m.; Fayetteville Veterans Home

April 21

The Freedom Golf Scramble at Diamante CC in Hot Springs Village. Sponsors and teams register at www.ArkansasFreedomFund.org.

May 3

LRAFB Retiree Appreciation Day; Hangar 1080

May 16-18

Hitting for Heroes Softball Tournament at Bishop Park in Bryant. Info at www.ArkansasFreedomFund.org

May 26

State of Arkansas Memorial Day Ceremony; 10 a.m.; Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery at North Little Rock

May 30

Golf Scramble for AFF Hunting Program. Hot Springs CC. Hot Springs. Sponsors and teams register at www.ArkansasFreedomFund.org.

RESOURCES FYI

Military OneSource

Confidential services, including non-medical counseling and specialty consultations, are available through Military OneSource. Eligible individuals may receive confidential services at no cost.

Operation Homefront

Operation Homefront assists military families during difficult financial times by providing food assistance, auto and home repair, vision care, travel and transportation, moving assistance, essential home items, and financial assistance.

ARVets

The mission of ARVets is to enhance the overall quality of life for military personnel, veterans and their families by improving access to resources and strengthening support systems through all phases of the military life cycle. ARVets will proactively offer more innovative ideas and methods to deliver services and focus on a grassroots case-management approach.

Arkansas Freedom Fund

The Arkansas Freedom Fund (AFF) a Nonprofit, Veteran's 501c3 that serves, supports and benefits military personnel, veterans, wounded warriors and their families. The primary focus of the organization is rehabilitative recreational outdoor activities. Many military personnel and Veterans need opportunities to get out and do physical activities, experience nature, connect with others that have similar backgrounds and help each other connect with civilian activities outside of a military or medical construct. Cycling, Golfing, Fishing and Hunting programs are adapted to meet the requirements of the Veteran, regardless of physical and mental ability or disability.

Hero 2 Hired

Hero2Hired (H2H) was created to make it easy for Reserve Component service members to connect to and find jobs with military-friendly companies. H2H also offers career exploration tools, military-to-civilian skills translations, education and training resources, as well as a mobile app. Support for H2H is provided through the Department of Defense's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.

[ESGR](#)

ESGR, a Department of Defense office, was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment. ESGR is supported by a network of more than 4,900 volunteers in 54 committees located across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam-CNMI, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

[Vet Tix](#)

Vet Tix is a nationally recognized 501c3 Veterans Support Organization whose mission is to "give something to those who gave." Vet Tix teams up with major sports teams, leagues, promoters, organizations, companies, venues and everyday event ticket holders to provide free (and discounted) tickets to the more than 26 million active military, Veterans and their families.

ADVA Vet News is a weekly email update providing information of interest to Service Officers and Veterans. Information has been provided from a variety of sources and does not necessarily constitute an opinion or position by ADVA.

A service of the [Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs](#), Public Information Department, 2200 Ft. Roots Dr. Bldg. 65, Rm. 119, N. Little Rock, AR 72114

This message was sent to members of the Arkansas Veterans' Commission, the Arkansas Veterans' Coalition, ADVA Service Officers, and County Veterans Services Officers mailing lists. Click [HERE](#) to be removed. Type "Remove Me" in the subject line.